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The joint training of professionals and non-professionals to work together as a team has received heavy emphasis in two projects: (1) Project ENABLE (Education for Neighborhood Action for Better Living Environment), and (2) the Child Study Association, Project Head Start Training Program for Parent Participation. The objectives in working with parents are: (1) to help parents improve their neighborhoods, (2) to help parents acquire power, and (3) to help parents achieve their aspirations and goals. Parent group education is the main method used. Teamwork is the concerted action of staff members and parents working together to achieve the purposes and goals of the program. Both professionals and nonprofessionals from poverty neighborhoods work with parents. New patterns in relationships emerge between parents and staff. The teamwork enhances the role functioning of both the professional and nonprofessional. Influences upon team functioning include: (1) commitment toward teamwork, and (2) mutual respect. The advantages of joint training include: common understandings of program concepts develop as a result of joint training. The main key to effective team functioning is seen as adequate training. (Author/KJ)

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Joint Training of Professionals and Non-Professionals for Team Functioning*

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Joint Training of Professionals and Non-Professionals for Team Functioning* - Martin L. Birnbaum

The joint training of professionals and non-professionals to work together as a team has received heavy emphasis in two projects undertaken by the Child Study Association of America: Project ENABLE (Education for Neighborhood Action for Better Living Environment)** and the Child Study Association--Project Head Start Training Program for Parent Participation.*** In both projects the team approach was developed and utilized in working with parents on their community concerns. Reflected here are the experiences of these programs. The focus is upon the team concept, team functioning, the reasons for training professionals and nonprofessionals together, and certain factors that must be considered in such training.

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Roundtable "Releasing the Potentials for Mental Health with Culturally Deprived Families," American Orthopsychiatric Association, 45th Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, March 21, 1968.

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***Conducted in OEO Regions I & V, 1967-69.

Objectives and Methods in Work With Parents

The objectives in work with parents on their community concerns are to assist families who live under conditions of poverty (1) to improve their neighborhoods and communities through the changing of community conditions that adversely affect their welfare, (2) to help parents acquire power through their involvement in the decision-making structures of community and political institutions, and (3) to achieve the aspirations and goals they hold for themselves and their children.

Parent group education is the basic method used in these programs to bring parents together to identify, explore and seek solutions to problems in the neighborhood and broader community that are detrimental to family life. Of special concern to parents are those problems that affect, directly or indirectly, the raising of their children--substandard housing, unsafe neighborhoods, influences of "the street," low quality of education, etc. The group experiences helps parents understand that what seem to be their own personal troubles are often commonly shared with other parents and are rooted in community conditions, particularly within community institutions that serve them inadequately. The Project ENABLE experience, for example, afforded many instances of this group method of work:

It was through the process of exploration that the group arrived at the fact they were really concerned because of the responsibility they felt for their children.

All community concerns expressed were ultimately connected with a great desire for a better living environment for the children. Some of the concerns expressed were:

Lack of traffic control, which (the parents) explained left their children exposed to great danger from speeding cars.

Lack of structured recreation and recreation facilities, which deprived them of constructive leisure time activities and forced them into activities which created a problem in the community and made for family discord.

Lack of health facilities--such as inaccessibility to hospital facilities which denied their children medical care; lack of mosquito control which created great discomfort and presented

a health hazard for their children.(1)

A fundamental assumption of parent group education is that as parents identify and understand the problems underlying their concerns, as they explore and plan solutions, and as they engage in successful social action, they tend to develop a new self-confidence and optimism about the future of their families. At the same time, their state of dependency and powerlessness tends to decrease.(2)

The Team Approach

Teamwork in these programs is the concerted action of staff members and parents working together to achieve the purposes and goals of the program. The team approach:

> Is based upon a philosophical acceptance of the need for a holistic approach to the problems of individuals and families. Identifiable and expressed problems related to child rearing, inadequate housing, ill health

1. Elliot, Thelma M., "Case History of a Local Project Enable Program." Child and Family Service, Austin, Texas, (Unpublished)
2. See Haggstrom, Warren C., 1965 "The Power of the Poor," in Poverty in America. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

> and underemployment cannot be viewed as single and encapsulated difficulties subject to solution by one approach and the utilizing of one method of attack. Therefore, a broad spectrum of knowledge, skills and techniques must be brought to bear by a variety of staff whose resources are utilized maximally in study, assessment, planning, program activities and evaluation toward achievement of program objectives.(3)

Both professional and nonprofessional staff work together on the team. The professionals are drawn from such fields as social work, education, and community work. The nonprofessionals are recruited from poverty neighborhoods and their backgrounds are similar to those of the parents in the program. Activities of team members include recruitment of parents, leadership of parent groups, community action activities, and individual work with parents to enable them to make the most effective use of available community services.

3. Birnbaum, Martin L., Harm, Mary Gay, Ortof, Selma B., 1967, "The Content for Training in Project Enable," Child Study Association of America, New York City, P.28

A team's relationship with parents differs from traditional agency-client relations. In the latter, the recipients of service tend to be dependent on the agency. They have little opportunity to identify their needs and establish their goals and priorities for change. The team approach, both in structure and function, is designed to reverse this relationship. As collaborators with staff, parents are actively involved in decisions affecting the activities of the team and in the implementation of plans jointly conceived.

New patterns in relationships emerge between parents and staff. As partners in a collaborative helping relationship, parents are treated with respect and equality. They grow to recognize the vital role they play in solving their own problems, and in doing so, they are contributing to the welfare of their communities. Through this process, parents gain new expectations of how they should be treated by community agencies, and their self-confidence in dealing with institutions is increased. Parents are also sensitive to the quality and type of relationships between nonprofessional and professional team members. Democratic relationships between staff of differing socio-economic backgrounds serve to demonstrate the commitment, particularly on the part of professionals, to the values of the program.

Team Functioning

Teamwork enhances the role functioning of both the professional and nonprofessional. Although each team member has a specific role, it is within the team structure that the role is spelled out, practiced and tested. Individual interests, ability, and role contributions influence the allocation of job assignments. Team members learn to respect and value one another's contributions as they engage in a democratic process of team functioning. The following report of a team's activity helps to illustrate how this happens.

> After each parent group meeting, the team discussed all problems presented in the parent group. In addition, the aides' knowledge of the community, the interpersonal relationship of the individual families and their problems contributed to the group leader's comprehension of the individual family's participation in the group setting. The aides' knowledge and contribution of information around each family in the group was an important factor in the group leader's knowledge about the group collectively and individually and helped in no small

> measure in allowing opportunity for each group member to express his concerns. No method of action or intervention either on the group level or individual family level was undertaken without the consensus of the team. For instance: any problem expressed by an individual group member was shared by the team, and the aide was helped through discussing this problem with the individual and/or was given assistance in getting this individual to discuss the problem in the group.(4)

Influences Upon Team Functioning

The development of effective teamwork between professional and nonprofessional staff is by no means an easy task or one that is simply achieved. There are a variety of difficulties and issues that influence team functioning. Once understood, however, many of the difficulties can be adequately dealt with and overcome through training and supervision. The following appear to be significant.

Commitment Toward Teamwork - Basic to the team effort is commitment. It is essential to recognize that:

4. Elliot, op. cit.

> Some individuals prefer to work alone or desire to be star performers. Persons with such attitudes generally do not make good team members. The team concept requires persons who can work cooperatively, who appreciate the value of teamwork, and who can respect the contributions of those who work with them."(5)

Mutual Respect - It is often difficult for the professional to recognize that job experience and formal education are not the sole factors that determine an individual's ability to perform the various tasks related to the helping function. Sometimes overlooked is the fact that nonprofessionals with certain attributes and life experiences have important contributions to make.

> Teams are composed of individuals with different social and economic statuses. It is important that such factors do not become a basis for evaluating the worth of team members. The experiences each

5. Barretto, Cyrene, Birnbaum, Martin, Harm, Mary Gay, Lander, Edward, Yonemura, George, 1967, "A Curriculum of Training for Parent Participation in Project Head Start," Child Study Association of America, New York, P.7

> person brings to the job and the contributions he is capable of making should be respected. In this regard the professionals and nonprofessionals on the team will need to recognize that there is a great deal that can be learned from one another."(6)

Program Ideology - The concepts, assumptions, and objectives of a program provide the rationale for the team's existence and give direction to its activity. Teamwork, by definition and practice, requires an understanding and commitment to program purposes and goals. However, it is not uncommon for staff members at all job levels to possess too narrow a perspective of the program in which they are employed. Frequently, staff do not adequately understand why the program exists in terms of the human needs it expects to satisfy, the service goals that reflect these needs, the organizational structure, and program activities through which service goals are to be achieved.

Role Understanding - Without an awareness of program ideology it is difficult for the average practitioner to comprehend and connect his role to the achievement of program objectives. Moreover, each member of the team should have a

6. Ibid, P.12

clear picture of his role and the roles of other team members and how these roles inter-related within the program structure.

> "Unless this relationship of the professional and the nonprofessional is appropriately conceptualized as a team in which the different agents play complementary roles, an unnecessary competitive cleavage will evolve between the professional and the nonprofessional and there will be much wasted energy."(7)

Suspicion and mistrust between professionals and nonprofessionals tends to arise when there is a lack of clarity and openness about the work each is performing.

Learning Content - It is important for team members to have a perspective of the body of knowledge, attitudes and skills required for their effective job performance. Understanding in this area helps a staff with different backgrounds to identify and appreciate the relevant life, job and educational experience they bring to the job situation. Conflicts between professionals and nonprofessionals as to who is better qualified to perform a

7. Riessman, Frank, New Careers, A Basic Strategy Against Poverty, A. Phillip Randolph Fund, New York City, P. 19

role are reducted when there is understanding of how experience and acquired knowledge and skill relate to job performance. Greater respect for training results when team members recognize the areas where their continued growth and learning is required.

Democratic Functioning - Democracy is an essential factor in team relationships.

> "The way decisions are made is an indication of whether the team is functioning democratically. Members should share in the decisions that affect their work. Opinions and contributions of team members should receive equal weight and attention.
>
> Attitudes toward authority on the team may be a significant factor in team functioning. There will always be members with greater than others, but this authority should be exercised judiciously and with full regard for the goals of team functioning and the jobs to be done.
>
> Freedom of expression is important. Team members should feel free to discuss concerns and issues without fear."(8)

8. Barretto, et. al., op. cit., P. 12

Advantages of Joint Training

Experience has demonstrated that in most cases effective teamwork can be developed only when the individuals on the team are adequately trained to work together. Joint training of professionals and nonprofessionals offers a number of advantages for dealing with the problems and issues related to team functioning.

1. The training situtation provides a model for effective team functioning. During training team members can experience the job benefits and personal satisfactions derived from democratic relationships and meaningful communication. Commitment on the part of the training staff to the team concept, and their behavior as a team, influences the trainees' attitudes toward teamwork. Learning experiences, directed toward the achievement of common objectives, tend to foster a "we" feeling, or bond among team members.
2. Team members learn and experience together what teamwork is, why it is important, the problems that can arise in team functioning, and what is required to achieve teamwork. As a result, common expectations for individual and team functioning emerge, thus enabling the team to evaluate its progress objectively.

3. Common understandings of program concepts develop. Team members learn about each others' roles and responsibilities and what they need to know and do individually and collectively to achieve program objectives. This process helps to validate the role contributions of each team member.

4. As team members engage in joint learning, contributing to each other's insights and understandings, new and more objective perceptions of one another start to emerge.

Training Content

Necessary for the joint training of professionals and nonprofessionals is attention to the body of knowledge and information, skills and techniques and attitudes which are generic to the roles team members will perform, and the way they will function on the job.

Of particular significance is the knowledge and information which will enable staff to understand program ideology and deepen their commitment to program objectives.

Programs serving new populations with new concepts of service delivery, innovative methods, and changes in manpower utilization place great demands upon the staff associated with these programs. Communication difficulties

between professional and nonprofessional, staff and the recipients of service add to the challenge. Often required of staff are shifts in attitudes, new understandings, the acceptance of different methods, and the learning of new skills. For the professional, a new role image may be required.

Knowledge which helps to provide a perspective on reasons that problems exist in the achievement of program objectives is important.

Frequently, staff attribute the difficulties they are having in attracting parents and sustaining their interest in the program to limited or poor techniques. While the "how to's" are important and should be included in training they are not alone a solution to greater program participation. Quick and easy solutions are often sought for long standing problems that are not principally related to poor or limited techniques. A danger of training approaches that stress techniques, unrelated to broader learning foundations, is that when the techniques fail in achieving their objectives, the tendency is to blame the recipients of service - to claim that "they" are not interested, are unmotivated, or are hard to reach, etc.

Better techniques are not the answer to problems that have a relationship to negative attitudes, limited knowledge, and program concepts too narrowly perceived and implemented.

Often overlooked are staff attitudes which tend to discourage parents from feeling they are really wanted and needed in the program and the significance of attitudes which reflect on understanding of the needs and interests of individuals and families living in poverty.

Negative attitudes toward the poor and misconceptions about their family life and child rearing practices become major obstacles to the development of an effective program. Knowledge which serves to counteract misconceptions and stereotypic thinking and which reveals the strengths of families trying to survive under adverse conditions can help to change attitudes. For example, in understanding families that are poor it is important to recognize how they perceive their own aspirations, goals, problems, and needs. Knowledge drawn from studies, based upon contacts with a variety of low-income families, provides rich content for learning.[9] Secondly, it is

9. For example, see "Social and Community Problem in Public Housing Areas," discussed in "Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower Class Family," in Daedalus, Winter 1966; Lewis, Hylan G., "Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families," Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Washington, D.C., 1961; Bernard, Sidney E., "Fatherless Families: Their Economic and Social Adjustment," The Florence Hiller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare," Massachusetts, 1964

necessary to recognize the impact that institutional forces in health, education, public welfare, housing, and employment have upon family life and child rearing practices; how these forces affect the ability of parents to achieve their goals and sustain the aspirations they hold for themselves and their children.

New concepts of service delivery often require new understandings to support the acceptance of change. Working with parents as active partners in the process of institutional change requires knowledge about the implications self help and decision making power have for mental health. Knowledge about the consequences of powerlessness, and the ways the program is organized to overcome this condition, contributes to this understanding.

Methods utilized for the delivery of services should be understood within the ideological framework of the program. Motivation for acquiring skills may be enhanced when recognition exists of their importance in achieving program objectives.

For instance, in learning group leadership skills, content dealing with the values of group experience in changing negative self-attitude and influencing action toward social change should be stressed. In recruitment, knowledge of environmental hardships, and their impact upon child rearing and recognition that families are in-

terested in, and concerned about, their children's welfare help to sharpen sensitivity and deepen communication between staff and parents.

Moreover, knowledge about the social environment contributes to the growth of respect and understanding between team members of diverse backgrounds. It may hel; the nonprofessional to look back at his life experiences with greater insight and strengthen his commitment to service.

Conclusion

These experiences suggest that a team division of labor between professionals and nonprofessionals could be applied to a variety of human service fields and that the team approach holds considerable promise for resolving organizational and human relations problems frequently encountered when persons of differing social statuses work closely together. However, the key to effective team functioning is adequate training. Joint training provides a natural way for preparing team members to function together effectively. The content for such training is important. A strong knowledge base emphasizing program ideology helps a staff with differing backgrounds to better understand their roles in the program and the signficance of their working together as a team.

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4. Elliot, op. cit.

5. Barretto, Cyrene, Birnbaum, Martin, Harm, Mary Gay, Lander, Edward, Yonemura, George, 1967, " A Curriculum of Training for Parent Participation in Project Head Start," Child Study Association of America, New York, P. 7

6. Ibid, P. 12

7. Riessman, Frank, New Careers, A Basic Strategy Against Poverty, A. Phillip Randolph Fund, New York City, P. 19

8. Barretto, et. al., op. cit., P. 12

9. For example, see "Social and Community Problem in Public Housing Areas," discussed in "Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower Class Family," in Daedalus, Winter 1966; Lewis, Hylan G., "Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families," Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Washington, D.C., 1961; Bernard, Sidney E., "Fatherless Families: Their Economic and Social Adjustment," The Florence Hiller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare," Massachusetts, 1964